



## **Sexual Education Committee**

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## **Inclusive Contraceptive Sex Education**

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### **Position**

It is the position of Iowa Youth Congress, the voice of Iowa's youth, to modify Iowa Code 256.11 to ensure that sexual education is inclusive of all students by incorporating information about all types of contraceptive methods.

### **Current Situation**

Currently, the Iowa Schools' sexual education curriculum mandates that the curriculum being used is up-to-date, age-appropriate, and medically accurate. It includes a basic requirement for discussing the prevention and control of diseases including, STDs and AIDS in high school, but without requiring education on any contraception methods, this requirement is unable to be fully met, and disproportionately hurts the LGBTQIA+ community. Educator Stanzy Scheetz states, "Many health curricula focus on people in heterosexual relationships, leaving out children who are gay, nonbinary, or transgender (*Gazette*, 2021)." This is backed up by data stating that under 7% of U.S Gender and Sexual Minority Youth report being exposed to inclusive sex education (*Rabbitte*, 2020). This lack of inclusive contraceptive education is linked to high rates of teen pregnancies and STDs. (*CDC*, 2022).

### **Rationale**

Regardless of an individual's stance on sexuality or its presence in society, Iowa's current sex education curriculum is hurting young Iowans' health, especially those in the LGBTQIA+ community. While teen pregnancy rates are relatively low, 46.6% of bisexual women reported a teen pregnancy while only 28.4% of heterosexuals reported a teen pregnancy (*Goldberg*, 2016), this disparity is due to a lack of inclusive contraceptive education. One study showed lesbians were 90% less likely than heterosexuals to use long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) to prevent pregnancy (*Charlton*, 2019). These contraceptives are shown to be more effective than other short-term options (*CDC*), yet, they aren't being used by the most vulnerable communities.

The lack of inclusive contraceptive sex education and its untapped effects also lead to large economical harm. It's estimated that \$15.2 billion could be saved on Medicaid-covered maternity and infant care alone by preventing unplanned pregnancies. Another study estimates that 1/3 of women's wage gains since 1960 is because of access to birth control. This is backed by a different study that determined that access to birth control by age 20 "significantly reduces the

probability that a woman is subsequently in poverty” (*JEC*). This data shows the drastic need for inclusive contraception education.

Due to the lack of change in our sex education system, STDs in Iowa have also risen. From 2021 to 2022, there has been a 55% increase in Iowans with infectious syphilis (*Krebs, 2022*). Additionally, the Iowa Public Health Tracking Portal shows a gonorrhea rate of 219 cases per 100,000, making it higher than the US average. Individuals who do not have easily accessible information about different contraceptive methods are far more likely to become ill from STDs (*Fehring, 2018*). Because of this, the CDC declares teenagers and members of the LGBTQIA+ community to be at a higher risk for STDs. For instance, seven out of ten early syphilis cases are reported from gay and bisexual men (*CDC*).

Iowa code 256.11 does not require any information regarding contraception, appropriate interactions or inclusive language to be covered in sex education. By changing this code to require standards that promote inclusive contraceptive-based sex education, Iowa students would become further educated in sexual health. This will lead to a decrease in teen pregnancy and in sexually transmitted diseases. Much of this has been proven by The Colorado Family Planning Initiative which made contraceptives more attainable by lowering costs and raising understanding of their accessibility. This caused teen pregnancy and abortion rates to lower by 50% consequently saving \$70 million in public assistance costs (*CDPHE, 2017*).

### **Recommended Action**

If officially filed by the Iowa State Legislature, the Iowa Code 256.11 should be modified in such a way that high schools are required to teach inclusive sex education, which incorporates all types of contraceptive methods. Schools must teach the importance and effectiveness of condoms and different types of birth control, such as implants and IUDs, that are inclusive to all relationships.

Additionally, the Iowa Code should make it clear that curriculums must include sex education principles that are inclusive of all genders and sexual orientations. Such a change is crucial to the youth of Iowa right now. Improvement of the health of Iowa’s youth will only happen if the LGBTQIA+ community is accounted for. Inclusive sexual education means a change in thinking and in language for this curriculum.

A school is a place where students are taught how to succeed in life, including in areas relating to their health. Without proper inclusive sexual education, these values and goals cannot be achieved.

Regards,  
Sex Education Committee  
Iowa Youth Congress

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